

DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE

OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD
BUILDING 316, FORT PICKETT
BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA 23824
1 September 2010

*VaARNG Regulation 621-1
*VaANG Regulation 213-1
Effective 1 September 2010

EDUCATION

**Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program
(VaNGSTAP)**

History. This publication is a revision of the current regulation, and adds new criterion for use of the State Tuition Assistance Program.

Purpose. This regulation implements policy and procedural guidance for the administration and awarding of Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Grants.

Applicability. This regulation applies to all eligible traditional and Title 32 Active Guard and Reserve service members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard.

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Section 1

General

1-1. References

References used in this regulation-

- a. Code of Virginia Section 23-7.4 and 23-7.4:2
- b. AR 135-91, 01 Feb 05, Service Obligations, Methods of Fulfillment, Participation Requirements, and Enforcement Procedures
- c. ANGI 36-2001, 15 Jan 97, Management of Training and Operational Support within the Air National Guard
- d. AR 621-5, 06 Sep 09, Army Continuing Education System

1-2. Objectives

The objectives of the State Tuition Assistance Program are-

- a. To attract and retain quality membership in the Virginia National Guard.
- b. To encourage retention of quality service members in the Virginia National Guard.
- c. To improve the education level of service members in the Virginia National Guard.
- d. To enhance the morale, performance and professionalism of Virginia National Guard members.

1-3. Terms

Terms of this program are defined as-

- a. Satisfactory participation/performance as defined by AR 135-91 and ANGI 36-2001

(1) Attending all scheduled drills unless excused by the unit commander or granted a leave of absence. Service members present at scheduled drills will not receive credit for attendance unless they are wearing the prescribed uniform. They must also present a neat and military appearance and perform assigned duties in a satisfactory manner as determined by the unit commander. Soldiers who do not receive credit for attending drill will be charged with an unexcused absence.

(2) Attending and satisfactorily completing the entire period of annual training unless excused by proper authority.

b. School Term: That part of the school year equaling not less than 110 days.

c. Quarter: A period of instruction in certain schools usually numbering four (including summer) annual periods of 10 to 12 weeks in length each (shorter in the summer).

d. Semester: A period of instruction, normally 15-18 weeks in duration (shorter in the summer). Most schools conduct three semesters- Fall, Spring, and Summer.

e. Distance Learning (DL): Courses taken by a student where as sessions do not regularly convene in a traditional school setting or lecture in a classroom. DL, as a means of instruction includes but is not limited to courses facilitated via video teleconference, Internet or self-study courses.

f. Continuing Education Courses: Courses offered by schools that run continuously until the student reaches degree completion. Classes last anywhere from five to eight weeks and are completed one after the other usually without breaks as in traditional schools (i.e. Bluefield College and Averett College).

g. Unit Commander: The lowest level of Command with administrative authority and responsibility (i.e. Detachment, Company, Troop, Squadron, or Flight).

h. Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA): A federally funded tuition assistance program used by Active Duty Army, Reserve, and Army National Guard.

i. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education System (DANTES): A federally funded tuition assistance program used to fund non-traditional education (i.e. distance learning).

1-4. Policy

Policy for administering this program is based on guidelines prescribed in the Code of Virginia, 23-7.4 and 23-7.4:2. Due to legislative constraints which may be imposed annually, guidelines are herein established for a fair, equitable and lawful administration of the program to the extent that funding is provided.

1-5. Eligibility

Virginia Guard members are eligible to receive Tuition Grants so long as the following conditions are met-

a. The service member must have met all eligibility requirements prior to the application deadline in order to receive State Tuition Assistance.

b. Applicants must have a remaining active service or contractual obligation of two years to the Virginia National Guard after completion of the academic period in which TA grants were received. Approval waivers are accepted for the following reasons:

(1) Enlisted members who take part in the Reenlistment Bonus Program will submit a letter

in writing to the Education Services Office indicating their intent to reenlist and acknowledging the service obligation for using State tuition grants.

(2) Notwithstanding the foregoing requirement that a member of the Virginia National Guard have minimum of two years remaining on their service obligation, at the discretion of the Adjutant General, if a member is activated or deployed for federal military service or state active duty, an additional day may be added to the members eligibility for the grant for each day of active federal service or state active duty not to exceed 1 year. In order for state applications to be considered for approval under this paragraph, applicants must meet the following conditions:

(a) Satisfy all other eligibility requirements listed in section 1-5.

(b) Active member of the Virginia National Guard and maintain membership through completion of the academic period.

(c) Remaining service/contractual obligation plus the number of activated days of federal military service or state active duty must be greater than or equal to two years after completion of the academic period.

c. Applicants must be in satisfactory participant/performance status and maintain the same throughout the academic period of the grant.

d. The service member cannot be flagged for any reason. If flagged during the course of study for which tuition assistance has been granted, tuition assistance for that term will not be withdrawn but continued only until the end of the current term.

e. The service member must have attended or been properly excused from all unit training assemblies within the last six months.

f. To receive State Tuition Assistance, the service member must have satisfactorily completed initial basic training requirements or the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) for ROTC Cadets.

g. Applicants must be accepted, or enrolled in:

(1) Any accredited state institution of higher education in Virginia.

(2) Any private, accredited and non-profit institution of higher education in Virginia whose primary purpose is to provide collegiate or graduate studies exclusive of religious or theological education.

(3) Course(s) or program(s) offered by public vocation or technical schools listed on the Approved School Listing. For an updated listing of approved vocation or technical schools, contact the State TA Program Manager.

h. Schools may be added to the approved list at any time by the State Education Services Office

after verification of eligibility through the Veterans Administration and approved by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia.

i. In order to receive grants from the State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) for DL courses, the main campus for the school must be located in Virginia or the corporate headquarters for the school must be located within Virginia. The Education Services Office will maintain a list of schools that are authorized funding for DL courses through State Tuition Assistance Program. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that DL courses are authorized for a particular institution prior to completing an application for the State Tuition Assistance Program.

1-6. Benefits

Specifics associated with State Tuition Assistance Program benefits include-

a. State Tuition Assistance Grants will not exceed in any event the total cost of tuition for the term, quarter or semester. Federal tuition assistance and benefits can be used in conjunction with State Tuition grants.

b. State TA grants can be used by Virginia Guard Members to achieve one degree program at each level of study, to include associate's degree, bachelor's degree, post graduate degree (master's, PhD or law degree) and certificate or licensure. Vocational type skills considered essential for the average worker are not limited by number of credits or degree completion requirements.

c. The tuition assistance grant ceilings for each program year will be determined by the Adjutant General, subject to the level of funding provided by the General Assembly of Virginia and section 23.7-4:2 of the Code of Virginia.

d. Commanders will ensure their units are notified of grant ceilings available for participants for the upcoming year prior to the suspense date for the fall term application deadline (1 July).

e. Applicants are required to apply for all available forms of federal benefits and Veterans Affairs entitlements prior to applying for state assistance. AGR personnel must utilize federal tuition assistance through regular Army resources (<http://www.earmyu.com>). Any amount over the federal grant can be applied to state tuition assistance up to the maximum allowable amount for the semester, plus authorized text book limits. Textbook grants are subject to change and are offered so long as State Tuition Assistance Program funding is available.

f. Both federal and state tuition assistance grants cannot equal over 100% of tuition cost per semester.

g. State funding for various programs to include the State Tuition Assistance program are subject to change each year; therefore, priorities for applicants to be considered to receive State Tuition Assistance Program grants are as follows:

(1) Enlisted applicants who have previously received assistance through this program. Service members who are currently seeking their first stated educational goal and are currently continuing

educational plans to complete their associate's degree, bachelor's degree or certification only.

(2) Officers who have not completed their bachelor's degree and need to complete their bachelor's degree for promotion to Captain.

(3) Warrant Officers seeking their associates or bachelor's degrees.

(4) Any service member seeking an undergraduate college degree.

(5) Any service member seeking a graduate degree.

(6) Other education programs for any member of the Virginia National Guard as deemed appropriate by the State Education Services Officer.

h. Written authority to bill the Department of Military Affairs will be issued to the school of enrollment in the amount calculated from the tuition grant determined for each service member. Tuition amounts will be verified by the school after the student has registered and completed enough of the term, semester, or quarter to receive a grade for the course even if they withdraw from the course. To avoid billing errors, it is critical that the service member immediately notifies the state education office of any changes associated with courses attended throughout the academic period.

i. Invoices from the school will be processed for payment immediately upon receipt. Generally, institutions forward invoices to the state education office after the add/drop dates have expired for the semester. In circumstances where TA grants have been paid to the schools on behalf of a service member and it is later determined the service member did not achieve a passing grade (according to the individual school standards), the amount of the TA grant will be paid by the service member through the recoupment process (section 3-2).

j. Verified TA grants will be paid directly to the school in the applicant's name. Direct payment or reimbursement to the student is not authorized. The Education Services Office issues written authorization to the institutions which authorizes the institution to bill the Education Service Office for the amount of the student grant.

Section 2

Application Procedures and Responsibilities

2-1. Applicant

Eligible Guard members who apply for State Tuition Assistance grants are responsible for-

a. Submission of the application is the responsibility of the applicant. Applicants must ensure applications are received by the State Education Services Office prior to the published deadline. Failure to do so within the prescribed deadlines will result in a disapproved application.

b. Applicant must submit their application online by the deadline date established each semester by the State Education Services Officer (ESO).

c. Submit grades to the State Education Services Office following the course or academic period completion. Failure to provide the State Education Services Office with a grade transcript will prevent further tuition assistance grants from being processed. Service members who receive a grade of Incomplete, Recycle, Continuing Satisfactorily or other grades for not completing the course must submit their final grade within 30 days from the end of the semester in which they received a State Tuition Assistance grant. In the event a final grade can not be obtained, the individual is required to have a letter submitted by the college/university addressed to the State Education Services Officer that indicates the individual is still participating satisfactorily. This letter must indicate the approximate date of course completion. Failure to comply with the above requirement will be cause for recoupment of the State Tuition Assistance paid on the service member's behalf.

d. Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 for undergraduate and 3.0 for graduate level course work. Failure to maintain a 2.0 GPA will prevent further participation in the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program.

e. Must agree to serve and/or continue to serve with the Virginia National Guard for a period of two years following the end of any academic period for which State Tuition Assistance is paid. Applicants must agree to repay the Commonwealth of Virginia on a prorated basis for any failure to serve the two-year service period for which state tuition is paid.

f. Sign and submit a promissory note for each FY.

g. Have satisfied any debt to the State Tuition Assistance Program.

2-2. Unit Commanders

Units commanders are responsible for the following-

a. Ensures all service members within their organization are aware of this program. Commanders will post scheduled suspense dates on the permanent bulletin board.

b. Designates at each level of command down to company, troop, battery, detachment, squadron or flight an Education Services Advisor to assist service members with educational programs.

c. Screens all requests for discharge and /or interstate transfers to determine whether the service member has received tuition assistance grants. Commanders must verify whether personnel requesting discharge have incurred a service obligation by participation in the Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Program by contacting the State ESO. The names of those requesting discharge who have an existing service obligation, will be forwarded to the State ESO for recoupment action.

d. Commanders and Retention personnel should remind service members requesting early separations that recoupment actions will be initiated by the Commonwealth of Virginia if they fail to complete their obligatory period of service in the Virginia National Guard. Approval authority for waivers of this commitment due to hardship and certain valid mitigating circumstances rests with The Adjutant General of Virginia.

2-3. State Tuition Assistance Program Manager

State Tuition Assistance Program Manager is responsible for the following-

- a. Receives and processes all applications for State Tuition Assistance prior to the deadline.
- b. Reviews all applications for accuracy and completeness.
- c. Approves or disapproves each application
- d. Maintains a current list of approved schools and costs.
- e. Submits approved state tuition assistance grant roster to each institution of higher learning on behalf of eligible Guard member.
- f. Processes all payments to approved schools and maintains strict accountability of all funds expended.
- g. Provides a monthly report of the State Tuition Assistance Account within the first five days of each month to the Education Service Officer (ESO).
- g. Maintain a current Special Agreement Contract between the VANG and the school on file in the Education Office and initiate update every two years.

2-4. State Education Services Officer (ESO)

The ESO is responsible for the following-

- a. Monitors the overall effectiveness of the program.
- b. Prepares all correspondence concerning the State Tuition Assistance Program and determines deadlines for each semester.
- c. Publishes proposed funding guidelines and maximum tuition amounts for each year after the legislature has approved funding.
- d. Serves as the primary liaison with education institution financial aid directors to include the establishment of all Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Special Arrangement Contracts (SACs).
- e. Monitors the overall effectiveness of the State Tuition Assistance Recoupment Program
- f. Reviews and makes initial determination on all appeals/waiver requests for late applications and recoupment actions.
- g. Verify all monthly monthly credit card statements.

h. maintains strict accountability of all funds expended and submits quarterly budget projections.

2-5. The Adjutant General of Virginia.

The Adjutant General of Virginia-

a. Serves as the final authority on all aspects of the program.

b. Acts as the final appeal authority for two year service obligation waivers, hardship waivers, and late application appeals.

c. Directs a State Tuition Assistance Review Board to convene at his/her discretion. The review board will convene in order to make recommendations to the TAG pertaining to the State Tuition Assistance Program. The members of the board will be determined by the scope or issues that need to be discussed.

d. Establishes the maximum tuition amount for each year after legislature has approved funding.

Section 3

Late Applications and Appeals

3-1. Late Applications

a. Any applicant wishing to submit an application after the deadline must contact the State Tuition Assistance Program Manager.

b. Late applications that are approved will be processed immediately.

c. To appeal a disapproval or a late application Soldiers must submit in writing to the Education Services Officer extenuating circumstances for the late submission. The applicant will be notified in writing of the decision made by the state ESO. If the application is disapproved by the ESO, service members may submit an appeal to the Adjutant General for consideration; however, the applicant must do so within 15 days of receipt of the disapproval letter from the ESO. Any appeals to the TAG must be routed through the chain of command to the Education Services Office.

d. Applications received after the beginning of the academic term in which the assistance is requested will be returned disapproved.

3-2. Recoupment.

State Tuition Assistance grants paid to institutions on behalf of service members are subject to the recoupment program if the service member fails to achieve and maintain eligibility requirements listed in section 1-5 of this regulation. Applicants must submit final grades within 30 days after completion of the course.

a. Courses that fall into the below categories are also subject to the recoupment program-

- (1) Classes withdrawn after the course add drop date.
- (2) Incomplete classes
- (3) Failed classes
- (4) Repeated classes for which previous tuition funds were paid
- (5) Failure to turn in grades

b. Once the requirement for recoupment is identified, an initial letter of notification will be forwarded to the service member by mail indicating the pro-rated amount due and reason for recoupment. Once the initial notification is received, the service member has 30 days to respond to the state Education Services Office in order to reconcile the debt. A second notification letter will be mailed after the initial 30 days has expired in order to reconcile any remaining debt. **Failure to repay debts within 60 days will cause the recoupment action to be forwarded to the Treasurer of Virginia at the Department of Military Affairs for collection through 1) Comptroller's Debt Set-off, 2) a collection agency, and/or 3) the Attorney General's Office.**

c. Soldiers have two repayment options to satisfy their debt to the Commonwealth. The repayment options are as follows:

- (1) Option A: One-time or full payment using a personal check, bank check or money order.
- (2) Option B: Soldiers may make monthly payments based on the following schedule. The minimum monthly repayment amount is \$100:
 - (a.) Total debt amount of \$1,200 or less will be repaid in 12 months or less.
 - (b) Total debt amount of \$1,201 to \$2,400 will be repaid in 24 months or less.
 - (c) Total debt amount greater than \$2400 will be repaid in 36 months or less.
 - (d) Payments may be forwarded to **The Treasurer of Virginia, Department of Military Affairs, ATTN: Education Section, Building 316, Fort Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia 23824.**
 - (e) In exceptional cases the G1 may grant an exception to policy which authorizes a modified repayment schedule, or waiver of the debt, typically based on fully documented financial and/or family hardship.

d. Soldiers who wish to request an ETP must submit the following documents to ATTN: Education Office, Building 316, Fort Pickett, Blackstone, Virginia 23824. (Ensure that the subject line includes your name and the semester for which the exception is requested. Example: Exception to Policy Request for SGT Smith-Fall 2009)

(1) A formally written, typed letter or memorandum requesting an extended repayment schedule or relief from recoupment in the form of an "Exception to Policy." You should clearly explain the background, timeline, attempts to correct or handle the extenuating circumstance, and any communications with the VAARNG Education Office.

(2) Memorandum from the Soldier's unit Commander detailing the soldier's performance, overall quality of service, and the validating the extenuating circumstance claimed by the Soldier. The commander's recommendation for approval or disapproval the soldier's request is required.

e. The Education Services Officer will review the circumstances of the case and the Soldier's request and make a recommendation to the G1. Be advised that processing of an ETP takes time, and there is no guarantee of approval. Soldiers with an outstanding debt are ineligible to receive State Tuition Assistance Program until such time as the debt is repaid in full or waived through an approved ETP.

BY THE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR:

OFFICIAL:

DANIEL E. LONG Jr.
Major General, VaARNG
The Adjutant General

PAUL E. GRIFFIN
COL, GS, VaARNG
Dir, Joint Staff Virginia Army
and Air National Guard

DISTRIBUTION:

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The proponent office of this regulation is JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO. Users are invited to send comments or suggestions to:
TAG of VA, ATTN: JFHQ-VA-G1-ESO.

APPENDIX A

State Tuition Assistance Program Application Submission Deadlines

FOR:

Spring Semester
(1 Jan – 15 May)
NLT November 1st

Summer Semester
(16 May – 15 Aug)
NLT April 1st

Fall Semester
(16 Aug – 31 Dec)
NLT July 1st

**This appendix is authorized for full distribution and dissemination*

APPENDIX B

Sample approval roster sent to institution

VIRGINIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
Joint Force Headquarters
Building 316, Fort Pickett
Blackstone, Virginia 23824

The following students have been approved for the indicated amount of tuition assistance grants from the State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP).

1. Federal and State Tuition Assistance programs are approved to provide grants on behalf of Virginia National Guard members to pay for Tuition and Authorized Fees.

*An authorized fee is defined by fees charged to 'all students' for enrollment purposes or is directly related to the course.

2. Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) grants are also paid by the Virginia National Guard Education Services Office. Please send separate Federal and State tuition assistance invoices to the above address.

3. Do not bill for more than the amount authorized for each student indicated below. If the tuition is less than the authorized amount, bill for the exact amount of tuition and mandatory fees.

4. Please include a copy of this authorization list with your invoice and indicate the total amount of tuition and fee charges for each student by their name and number of credit hours currently enrolled for the semester. In addition, please annotate if students on the authorization list did not attend.

2009 Spring Approved

SSAN	NAME	SCHOOL	STATE
XXXXXXXXXX	Soldier, Super	Old Dominion University	\$2,000.